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## The Kaddafi Hit Squad At Large?

Security was tightened at the top echelons of government recently, upon word that an assassination squad dispatched by Libyan strongman Muammar Kaddafi had entered the United States, with instructions to kill President Reagan. By last week the story—denied by the Libyans—had touched off a nationwide manhunt, and had led Reagan to consider a cutback in his public appearances.

The government's information has come principally from an informant—a former Lebanese terrorist, NEWSWEEK learned, who defected in Western Europe three weeks ago, claiming to have helped train assassination teams. He told U.S. officials that he was present at a meeting in Libya six or eight weeks ago at which Kaddafi issued

the order to kill Reagan—or failing that, other high officials, including Vice President Bush, Secretary of State Haig and U.S. employees at the United Nations. Members of Reagan's family, as well as his top aides, may also be potential targets.

The defector, unknown to American officials before he telephoned a U.S. diplomatic mission seeking asylum and money, was subjected to lie-detector tests. He passed. He is now in CIA custody in the United States. Some officials still doubt his story, but they are taking no chances. As Reagan put it, "Even sometimes when security gets what they think is a crank call, they can't take that for granted."

The worry was that Kaddafi could strike anywhere. It was learned, for instance, that

intelligence agents now believe that the gunman who attacked U.S. Embassy official Christian Chapman in Paris last month was a member of a three-man Libyan hit team that entered France from Cyprus on false passports. The latest evidence of Libyan plotting has prompted the State Department to issue an alert to diplomatic personnel around the world. Meanwhile, the White House began to debate how to respond if the Libyans attacked Reagan. NEWSWEEK learned that two basic options were on the table: a naval blockade that would cut off Libya's oil exports and food imports; and an air strike against one or more of Kaddafi's terrorist training camps. Given such possibilities, a high U.S. official will probably issue a last-ditch public warning this week to American companies in Libya that the safety of their 2,000 employees can no longer be guaranteed.